

Your County, Your Government

Agencies Working Together



Fact Sheet #18
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Behind the Scenes of Search and Rescue

A hunter or hiker has gone missing, a patient with Alzheimer's wanders off, a canoer or boater has not arrived back at the launch site... who do you call when you need help in these types of emergencies? One number has been established for all types of emergencies, including search and rescue calls. That number is 9-1-1. So what happens when you call to report a missing person? When a call comes in about a missing person, the 9-1-1 dispatcher routes the call to the law enforcement agency that provides service to that area. Law enforcement agencies have established procedures on what resources will be used for specific types of incidents. They may determine it necessary for other agencies to take the lead role for a search and rescue operation. In those cases, Santa Rosa County Emergency Management will dispatch the needed organizations from a list of available resources. Emergency Management can also issue a quick message for citizen awareness by issuing a recorded phone notification to residents in the area.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IN A SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCY

- ! If you become aware of a missing person, you should immediately call 9-1-1 and speak to a trained dispatcher for assistance. The 9-1-1 Center will then direct your call to the appropriate organization.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Emergency Management provides a support role in search and rescue calls by establishing a command and communications center to support the lead agency in Incident Command as outlined by the National Incident Command Management System. NIMS provides a tested, comprehensive approach to incident management and is used to respond across jurisdictions and levels and functional disciplines. Should local assets get overwhelmed, it has the capability to request resources from other jurisdictions including the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Should the situation warrant, the local Emergency Operations Center can be activated to serve as an incident command post or to support the search and rescue activities.

Organizations that assist with Search and Rescue include but are not limited to:

- All fire departments
- Lifeguard Ambulance Service
- CERT
- Baptist Hospital Life Flight
- Santa Rosa Correctional Facility
- Southwest Panhandle Search and Rescue
- Escambia Search and Rescue

CERT, or Community Emergency Response Team is a preparedness program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. CERT's are formed by members of a neighborhood or workplace who want to be prepared for the hazards that may threaten their communities. CERT's are not intended to replace a community's response capability,

but rather to serve as an important supplement and are often called upon to assist. CERT's follow the direction of the Incident Commander and are trained in search and rescue planning, size-up or initial survey of the scene, search techniques, rescue techniques, and most important, rescuer safety. There are two established teams in our county:

Navarre CERT was founded in 2005 and has grown to a total membership of more than 100 members. Among its members, there are 29 licensed amateur radio operators and 13 certified instructors. In 2009, Navarre CERT members had a total of 12,199 volunteer hours.

Pace CERT was created in 2009 and serves the north part of the county. It has approximately 35 members whose skills include amateur radio, nursing, para-medicine, and tracking.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. How is Search and Rescue Funded? Search and rescue responders are primarily county fire departments, which are funded through current fire Municipal Services Benefit Unit or special fire taxing districts.

Q. How do I request help with a search and rescue? If you suspect a person is missing, call 911.

Q. What agencies are responsible for search operations? All search and rescue calls are immediately dispatched to Law Enforcement by the 9-1-1 call center. The law enforcement agency may determine another agency is best suited to be the lead response organization or request assistance from additional organizations.

Q. How do outside agencies get brought into Search and Rescue incidents? Through a request by the lead agency or Incident Commander.

Q. How do I get involved with Search and Rescue or with the local Fire Department? For more information on search and rescue, or to find out how to volunteer, contact the Santa Rosa County Emergency Management office at (850) 983-5360.

SEARCH AND RESCUE STATISTICS FOR SANTA ROSA COUNTY

**January 1, 2009-
August 31, 2009**

Water Rescue: 34
Missing Persons: 1

**January 1 2010 -
August 31, 2010**

Water Rescues: 29
Missing Persons: 3

Source: Santa Rosa County Emergency Management Communications

SAFETY TIP

Always carry your cell phone.



A cell phone is not only a means of social interaction, it can also save your life in an emergency situation. Thanks to a modern technology known as phase two, a modern cell phone can be tracked through the GPS of the phone or through the GPS of wireless towers. The latitude and longitude is passed through the 9-1-1 center when an emergency call is placed, and the coordinates can be viewed on a mapping software to provide visual location. There have been many instances, both locally and nationally, where a missing person was found thanks to their mobile device. Check with your provider to ensure your phone is phase two compliant.

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